



SPECIAL NEWS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS



Issue 1

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Special News for Special Needs*, a specially designed newsletter for families of children with special needs, published by Delaware Health and Social Services, Birth to Three Early Intervention System. Realizing how difficult it can be to attend evening meetings, we hope this publication will provide you with useful information as well as support and guidance. We would love to include personal stories and experiences from families, along with resources that you have found helpful. Please call Sandy Ward (302-422-1335) or Kellie McKeefery (302-995-8617) if you would like to contribute. Also, feel free to e-mail us at sward@state.de.us or kmckeefery@state.de.us. Your input is very important to us and we look forward to hearing your ideas, comments and suggestions.

MEET KELLIE & SANDY

Kellie McKeefery and Sandy Ward are the Family Support Specialists located at your local Child Development Watch (CDW) offices. Kellie is located at CDW on Limestone Road in Wilmington and Sandy is located at the CDW office in Milford. Also located at each Child Development Watch office is a Family Resource Room. The Resource Rooms provide a comfortable place for families to view books and videos about specific disabilities and issues related to parenting a child with special needs. Give Sandy or Kellie a call and they'll be happy to help you locate valuable resources! Also, check out the **New Resources** section in this newsletter to read about some great books and videos we have available for you!

FAMILY FORUM NEWS

Family Forum is held regularly in each county. These meetings provide information and support to parents of children with special needs. In response to families' requests, the meetings focus on particular issues and concerns related to raising a child with a disability. Guest speakers are invited to share their expertise and lead a group discussion. Family Forum is a wonderful opportunity for families to share stories and experiences. Families help each other deal with concerns and challenges faced when raising a child with special needs. Please plan to attend one of our meetings. We always welcome new families. Childcare is provided and light refreshments are served. Watch your mail for upcoming meeting flyers!



SIBSHOPS ARE COMING!

Sibshops are support groups for the siblings of children with special needs. The University of Delaware and the Birth To Three Early Intervention System will be offering Sibshops in Dover and New Castle beginning in January, 2003. These groups will be for siblings ages 4-6 and 7-10 and will meet one Saturday each month for three hours. Please call Sandy or Kellie for more details. We are really excited about this project and hope you will be able to join us.

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MAILING LIST



Please help us to keep our mailing list updated. If you are currently receiving mailings from us and would like to discontinue receiving them, please call Sandy or Kellie. If you would like to receive our mailings (especially the newsletter) via e-mail, please call or e-mail Sandy or Kellie with your e-mail address.

(Over)



Delaware Health and Social Services, Child Development Watch



PARENTS NEEDED FOR PARENT-TO-PARENT SUPPORT

Many parents of children with special needs would like to talk to or meet other parents facing similar challenges. Attending evening support group meetings isn't always possible or maybe you're just not comfortable doing that. We would like to link parents together who are interested in meeting other families of children with special needs (via telephone, e-mail, in-person). If you are interested, please call your local family support specialist or talk with your family service coordinator.



NEW RESOURCES



In each newsletter we will highlight some great resources that we have in the Resource Rooms. Please feel free to call Sandy or Kellie if you are interested in any of these.

- *Discipline Without Shouting or Spanking: Practical Solutions to the Most Common Preschool Behavior Problems*
- *Cerebral Palsy: A Complete Guide for Caregiving*
- *Even Little Kids Get Diabetes*
- *All About Attention Deficit Disorder (Video)*

FAMILY SUPPORT PARTNERS

Raising a child with special needs can present many challenges and talking to someone facing similar challenges can be very helpful. Child Development Watch has Family Support Partners available to talk with families and provide extra support. Our Partners are parents of children with special needs and have received special training to help support other parents. If you would like to talk to one of our Partners, please call your service coordinator or the family support specialist at your local Child Development Watch office.

DOWN SYNDROME ASSOC. OF SOUTHERN DELAWARE

The Down Syndrome Association of Southern Delaware meets monthly in Milford. Plans are also underway to hold meetings in the Smyrna area. For more information, please contact Jennifer Pink at 302-424-3896.

LESSONS FROM THE BUSINESS WORLD

By: Robin Fantl, ACSW, LMSW

CDW Senior Medical Social Work Consultant

Emotional objectivity sounds like a contradiction but it is how the world of business survives. Considering things objectively seems cold when we think of making decisions for our children. Each of us has the power and responsibility for guiding our children toward the dreams we have for them. All children come into this world with a set of anticipated dreams. Those are the things we parents lay awake at night thinking about for our children. When our child is born with a disability or becomes developmentally delayed, that set of anticipated dreams might no longer be realistic. The first thing we try to do is deny reality, feeling hollow and numb. We embrace our sorrow. Somewhere along the line we gather our courage and eyeball our challenge.

We need not throw our dreams away. What can be considered is shifting expectations in the goals we set and the outcomes we are willing to accept. We may need to think about downsizing, or choosing what part of the dream we want most for our child. With time, a child's skills will emerge. Keeping a diary or journal can sometimes show us a path, a success, or an achievement we may otherwise miss. Journaling with written words, or with pictures, from magazines or books, can provide a barometer for "measuring our productivity." It can serve as a tool so we can see where we can make alterations in our dreams to fit the skills of our child. It is an opportunity to honor our efforts.

The idea of honoring our efforts or those of others (our children) has a rich history in the business world. Throwing your own personal office party, self talk (giving yourself the boss's pep talk), and pats on your own back are healthy ways to maintain the hope propelling your dream. When others try to sidetrack your efforts or tell you how unrealistic your dreams for your child seem, remember that "compliments are like biscuits; they're best when they are homemade." You know your child better than anyone. You know what your child can achieve.

One of the secrets to success is being able to dream. It is the sense that we can shape things for the better, even in small ways, that gives us hope. Hope is the emotion that enables us to downsize our master plan, shift our expectations, alter our outcomes and still pursue our dreams.

